

Message Text

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14
ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 AGR-20 EB-11 DODE-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 OMB-01 L-03 SS-15 NSC-10 IGA-02

COME-00 RSR-01 /145 W
----- 104202

P R 310529Z AUG 73
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6181
INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 13622

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN, EAID, TH
SUBJ: RICE FOR CAMBODIA

REF: STATE 171608

1. IN EFFORT CUT THROUGH DELAYS OVER RICE EXPORTS TO CAMBODIA AND LAOS ARISING FROM INTRA-GOVERNMENT CONFLICT BETWEEN MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND BIFGO (BUREAU OF INSPECTION AND FOLLOW-UP OF GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS), ECON/CML. COUNSELOR CALLED ON COL NARONG, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF BIFGO, AUGUST 11. CRITICAL NATURE CAMBODIA RICE NEEDS WAS STRESSED, PARTICULARLY IMPORTANCE OF DELIVERY IN OCTOBER TO FILL GAP UNTIL SHIPMENTS ARRIVE FROM U.S.

2. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF NARONG'S REMARKS:

A) 10,000 TONS HAVE BEEN SOLD TO CAMBODIA AND AUTHORIZATION WILL BE GIVEN BY HIS OFFICE TO SELL ADDITIONAL RICE IN INCREMENTS UNTIL COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE FOR ADDITIONAL 25,000 TONS HAS BEEN MET.

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B) RTG WILL NOT LET THE CAMBODIANS GO WITHOUT RICE.

HOWEVER, NARONG HAS DOUBTS ABOUT DURABILITY OF KHMER GOVERNMENT AND DOES NOT WANT RICE FROM THAILAND TO FALL INTO COMMUNISTS HANDS.

C) PARBOILED RICE IS AVAILABLE FOR SALE TO CAMBODIANS AT ANY TIME, BUT THEY HAVE NOT ASKED FOR IT AND DO NOT LIKE IT.

D) TO INITIATE RTG ACTION FOR FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT INCREMENTS UNDER COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE FOR 25,000 TONS, REQUEST SHOULD BE SENT BY EMBASSY TO NARONG'S OFFICE.

E) NARONG AFFIRMED THERE HAD BEEN DELAYS IN OBTAINING SHIPPING FOR SECOND 5,000 TONS FOR WHICH LY KIM HENG HAD ALREADY SIGNED CONTRACT.

F) NARONG STATED HE HAD RECEIVED PLEAS FROM COMMANDING OFFICER KHMER MILITARY FORCES ACROSS BORDER FROM SURIN TO PROVIDE RICE BECAUSE SUPPLIES NOT ARRIVING FROM PHNOM PENH. SAID HE HAD DIRECTED THAT 1,000 SACKS FROM SECOND 5,000 TON CONTRACT BE DELIVERED TO THOSE FORCES. SAID HE HAD SIMILAR APPEALS FROM KHMER MILITARY IN BATTAMBAND THAT ASKED FOR RICE AND GASOLINE. EXPRESSED HOPE THEY WOULD BE SUPPLIED FROM PHNOM PENH.

COMMENT: NARONG'S STATEMENT ABOUT SHIPMENTS TO BATTAMBANG AGREES WITH THE VIEWS THAT DEPFORNMEN CHARTCHAI EXPRESSED TO THE AMB ON AUG 14. CHARTCHAI RECOMMENDED THAT ALL RICE GO TO PHNOM PENH AND ONE BE RETAINED IN BATTAMBANG. CHARTCHAI AND NARONG AGREED THAT IF BATTAMBANG RUNS OUT, THE THAI CAN SUPPLY IT DIRECTLY, MORE EASILY, AND AT LESS COST.
END COMMENT.

3. IN LIGHT OF ABOVE, EMB BELIEVES THAT MISSION FROM WASHDC PROPOSED IN REFTEL NOT REQUIRED AND THAT IT MIGHT CAUSE EM-BARRASSMENT TO RTG SHOULD KNOWLEDGE OF ITS PRESENCE BECOME KNOWN TO PRESS. RICE REMAINS POLITICALLY SENSITIVE SUBJECT TO GOVT AND A CONTINUING SOURCE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND BIFGO, AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED.

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4. AS ALTERNATIVE TO WASHDC MISSION, EMB IS EXPLORING POSSIBILITY AND SUGGESTS THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN IN WASHINGTON TO AUTHORIZING PURCHASING MISSION IN BANGKOK OF USAID LAOS, WHICH HAS BEEN BUYING RICE IN THAILAND FOR YEARS ON A GOVT TO GOVT BASIS, TO ENTER INTO PURCHASE AGREEMENTFOR RICE TO CAMBODIA IN LIEU OF PERIODIC FUTURE PURCHASE MISSIONS BY REPRESENTATIVE KHMER GOVT SUCH AS LY KIM HENG. EMB WOULD PROVIDE ALL FEASIBLE SUPPORT, AS IT HAS BEEN DOING FOR PURCHASE OF

RICE FOR LAOS. AS SSON A EXPLORATION HERE COMPLETED AND ASSUMING
NO SERIOUS PROBLEMS SEEN, WE WILL SUBMIT FIRM RECOMMENDATION
ON THIS MATTER.

5. EMB IN ANY EVENT WILL SEND REQUEST TO NARONG ASAP FOR
ADDITIONAL SHIPMENTS UNDER 25,000 TON COMMITMENT,
AND WILL REAFFIRM URGENT NEED FOR THIS RICE TO ARRIVE
IN OCTOBER. HOWEVER, CAVEAT NARONG (WHICH REINFORCED BY
CHARTCHAI COMMENT YESTERDAY) ENTERED ABOUT STAYING POWER
OF KHMER GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED AND IS LIKELY
TO MEAN RESISTANCE TO INCREMENTS LARGER THAN 5,000 TONS
AND INSISTENCE THAT THEY BE SPACED AT INTERVALS.

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